

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Bearmouth Microwave Radio Communication Facility

**Project Manager:** David Tripp TEP-CSB-1

**Location:** Granite County, Montana

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B1.19 Microwave, meteorological, and radio towers

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to acquire an approximate 5 acre parcel and construct a new microwave radio communication facility. Presently, the parcel contains a 0.5 acre fenced-in abandoned radio facility that sits on a gravel pad and includes a building, radio tower, and two propane tanks. BPA would remove the existing facility and construct the new facility in the same location on the gravel pad. The new facility would include a communications building, radio tower, as well as a 2,000 gallon propane tank. The new building would be 650 square feet, compared to the existing building which is about 300 square feet. The new radio tower would be 140 feet tall with a 900 square foot base, compared to the existing tower which is about 100 feet tall on a 300 square foot base. The existing fill pad may be expanded by 10 feet on the southwest side to accommodate the new building and tower; otherwise construction will take place within the existing 0.5 acre developed footprint. No new access roads or road improvements are proposed.

**Findings:** In accordance with Section 1021.410(b) of the Department of Energy's (DOE) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Regulations (57 FR 15144, Apr. 24, 1992, as amended at 61 FR 36221-36243, July 9, 1996; 61 FR 64608, Dec. 6, 1996, 76 FR 63764, Nov. 14, 2011), BPA has determined that the proposed action:

- (1) fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021, Subpart D (see attached Environmental Checklist);
- (2) does not present any extraordinary circumstances that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal; and
- (3) has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion.

Based on these determinations, BPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

*/s/ Justin Moffett*

Justin Moffett

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Stacy L. Mason

Stacy L. Mason

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: February 24, 2016

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

## Categorical Exclusion Environmental Checklist

This checklist documents environmental considerations for the proposed project and explains why the project would not have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources and would meet other integral elements of the applied categorical exclusion.

**Proposed Action:** Bearmouth Microwave Radio Communication Facility

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### Project Site Description

The project site consists of a fenced in constructed gravel fill pad that currently supports an abandoned radio tower and associated communication building. The remainder of the 5-acre parcel surrounding project site is native grasses and sage brush that appears to have been utilized for livestock grazing. The nearest residence is about 0.25 mile southwest of the project site; there are no other residences within 2 miles of the project site.

### Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. <b>Historic and Cultural Resources</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> BPA received concurrence on its determination of no historic properties affected from Montana SHPO on January 20, 2016. BPA also consulted with the Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy Reservation of Montana, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and Blackfeet Nation concurrently with the SHPO; however, they did not respond BPA's correspondence.</p>		
2. <b>Geology and Soils</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Minimal soil disturbance.</p> <p><u>Mitigation:</u> Erosion control measures would be used during construction to minimize impacts. Any disturbed soil would be restored by reseeding.</p>		
3. <b>Plants</b> (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> No special-status species present. Vegetation removal/disturbance would be minimal (approximately 200 square feet).</p>		
4. <b>Wildlife</b> (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> No special-status species present.</p>		

5. **Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish**  
(including federal/state special-status species and ESUs)



Explanation: None present.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: None present.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: None present.

8. **Land Use and Specially Designated Areas**



Explanation: No change to existing land use; not a specially designated area.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: The new communication facility would be visually consistent with the existing communication tower and building and would not be located in a visually sensitive area.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: Small amount of dust and vehicle emissions during construction.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Temporary construction noise during daylight hours. Construction would last about 12 weeks.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: Proposed action is located within existing facilities and would not impact human health or safety.

### Evaluation of Other Integral Elements

The proposed project would also meet conditions that are integral elements of the categorical exclusion. The project would not:

- Threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders.

Explanation, if necessary:

- Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:

- Disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or CERCLA excluded petroleum and natural gas products that preexist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases.

Explanation, if necessary:

- Involve genetically engineered organisms, synthetic biology, governmentally designated noxious weeds, or invasive species, unless the proposed activity would be contained or confined in a manner designed and operated to prevent unauthorized release into the environment and conducted in accordance with applicable requirements, such as those of the Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Institutes of Health.

Explanation, if necessary:

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#### **Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination**

Description: BPA has been working with the underlying landowner to acquire the property needed to construct the project.

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Based on the foregoing, this proposed project does not have the potential to cause significant impacts to any environmentally sensitive resource.

Signed: /s/ Justin Moffett  
Justin Moffett ECT-4

Date: February 24, 2016